

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
25 May 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION  
CONTAINED HEREIN IS NOT AUTHORIZED

ARMY and DOS review(s) completed.

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HIGHLIGHTS

A large, peaceful demonstration in Hue broke up with 75 students beginning a hunger strike and barricading the US Consulate building, and the consulate has orders to evacuate US personnel if the situation warrants. In a meeting with Ambassador Lodge, Chief of State Thieu outlined the government's plans for dealing with the dissident forces in Hue, indicating that the government intends to isolate the city rather than attack it. Militarily, there are indications of impending Communist attacks on the Plei Djereng Special Forces camp and the US base at An Khe.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
The Plei Djereng Special Forces camp in western Pleiku Province has been reinforced by US 25th Infantry Division forces after two days of heavy Communist pressure (Paras. 1-2). A major USMC/ARVN operation was launched against the Viet Cong 1st Regiment in northeast Quang Ngai Province (Para. 3). A captured document reveals Viet Cong/PAVN plans for a major attack against US 1st Air Cavalry Division base at An Khe, in Binh Dinh Province (Paras. 4-6). Weekly review of South Vietnam transportation routes and battle statistics (Paras. 7-8).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:  
The status of the barricades at the US Consulate in Hue is unknown at this time (Para. 1). The US Consulate has orders to evacuate US personnel if the situation warrants (Para. 2). A large Hue rally breaks up peacefully with 75 students beginning a hunger strike at the US Consulate building (Paras. 3-4). The funeral of an ARVN officer on 25 May in Hue was attended by high Buddhist, civic and military leaders and will be followed by the funeral of the ARVN lieutenant killed by a US gunner on 26 May (Para. 5). There have been further reports of disaffection with the "struggle" movement on the part of military officers in the Hue area (Para. 6).

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In a meeting with Ambassador Lodge on 25 May, Thieu outlined plans for dealing with the dissident forces in Hue (Para. 7). Scattered demonstrations in Saigon on 25 May were well controlled by government security forces (Paras. 8-10). Da Nang is quiet with no known "struggle" forces in the city (Para. 11).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:  
There have been no clashes between US and North Vietnamese jets since 10 May (Para. 1).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:  
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments:

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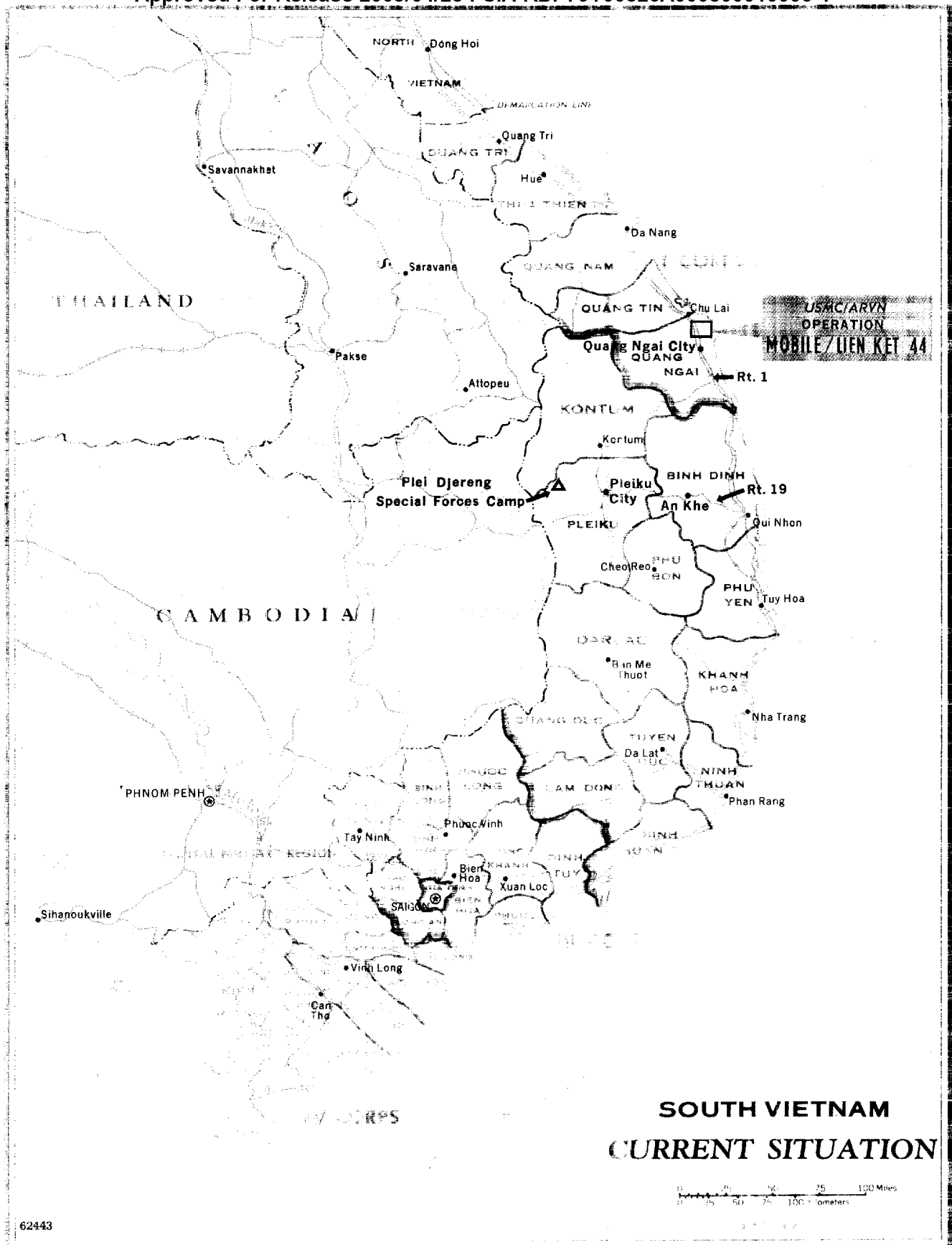
[REDACTED] Propaganda on the political unrest in South Vietnam emanating from Moscow, Peking, and Hanoi has taken differing lines on characterizing the struggle groups (Paras. 2-3).

VI. Other Major Aspects: The first reports on North Vietnam's early rice crop indicate that it will not be a good one (Paras. 1-3).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The 3rd Brigade/US 25th Infantry Division has dispatched one infantry battalion and one platoon of 105-mm. howitzers as reinforcement to Plei Djereng Special Forces camp, 25 miles west of Pleiku city, after yesterday's heavy contact between two company-sized Vietnamese CIDG security patrols and an estimated two PAVN battalions near the camp's outer defense perimeter. Late MACV reports indicate that the camp was subjected to a heavy mortar attack early today. No military casualties were sustained. However, 30 civilian dependents living in the camp were killed and at least 30 others wounded.

2. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] have previously indicated Communist intentions to launch major attacks against Plei Djereng and other strategically important government positions in the central highlands province of Pleiku during the monsoon season. Plei Djereng's strategic location near the Cambodian border enables US-advised CIDG units to monitor enemy troop and supply infiltration activities from Cambodia into the high plateau area.

3. Search-and-destroy Operation MOBILE/LIEN KET 44 was initiated yesterday by one USMC battalion, one Vietnamese Marine battalion, and one ARVN battalion in northern coastal Quang Ngai Province, approximately 15 miles north of Quang Ngai city. The ground sweep is to be screened to seaward by US Navy and ARVN coastal fleet vessels and along coastal Route 1 by USMC armored task force units. The Viet Cong 1st Regiment, with a strength of 2,000 men, is believed located in the operational sweep area. No enemy contact has thus far been reported.

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Communists Reportedly Plan Major Attack Against US  
1st Cavalry Division Base at An Khe

4. Translation of a document recently captured by 1st Air Cavalry Division forces in Binh Dinh Province discusses Viet Cong plans for an attack on the division's base camp at An Khe. The attack is allegedly to be launched from the north and south-east flanks of the camp, possibly in conjunction with another simultaneous assault on an outpost east of An Khe on lateral Route 19. Neither the time of the attack nor the size of the attacking force was mentioned.

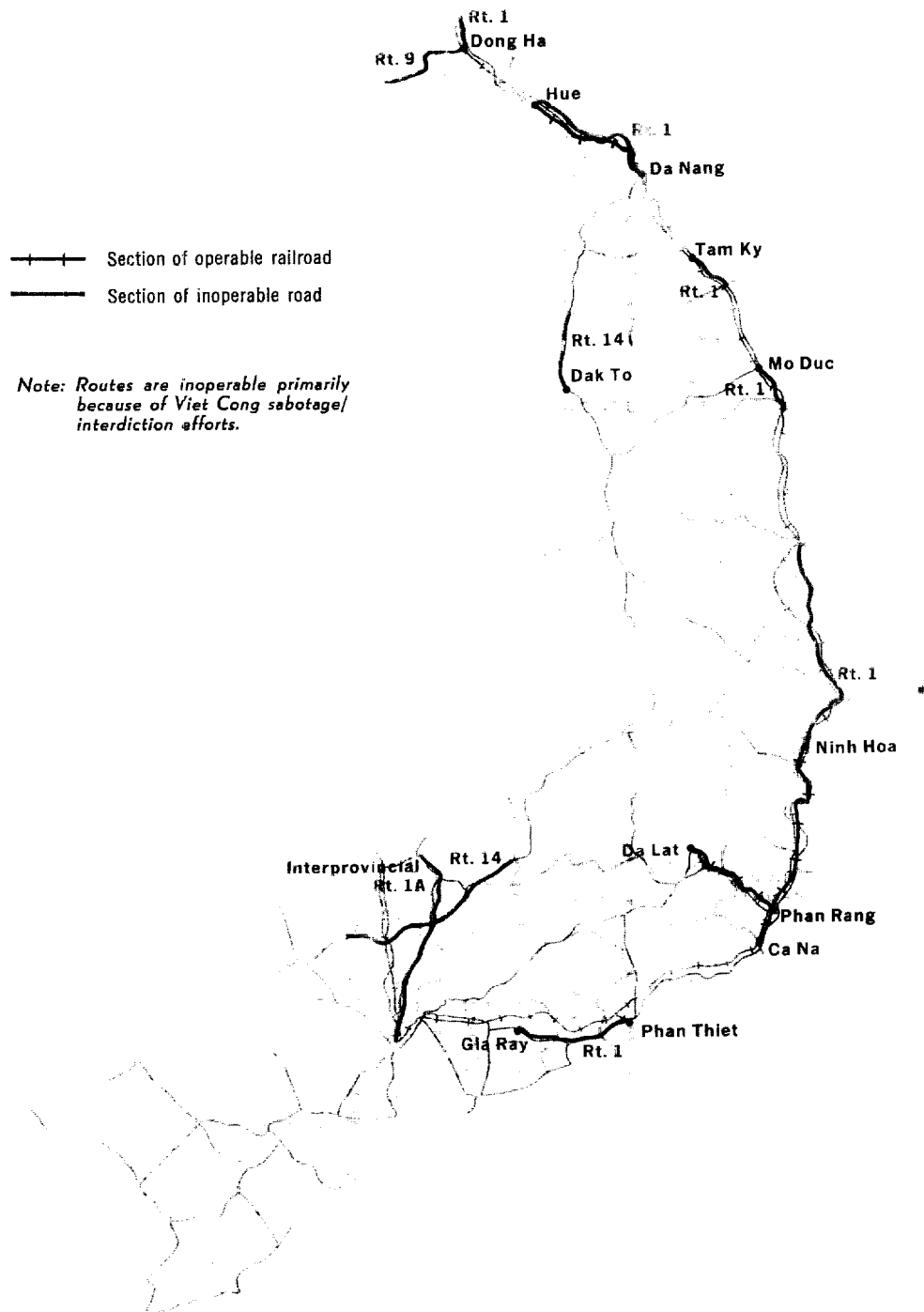
5. According to J-2 MACV, enemy strength in northeastern Binh Dinh Province currently totals approximately 16,000 troops, including more than 11,000 in regular, main force units. An attack on An Khe could probably be launched by elements of the 610th Division, including the 2nd Viet Cong and 12th and 22nd PAVN Regiments and six support battalions. Two local force Viet Cong battalions in the area could also support such an offensive thrust by the 610th Division. Other possible attack forces might include the 620th Division, headquartered in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai provinces, elements of which could be infiltrated into the An Khe area through the An Lao Valley, the Kim Son area, or the Vinh Thanh Valley. The 95th PAVN Regiment in Phu Yen Province could also support such an attack.

6. A major enemy operation against An Khe would probably include diversionary attacks against other nearby areas in an attempt to reduce the US defensive complement at An Khe by drawing away major reinforcements. An ideal time for such an operation would be during the reportedly imminent Communist offensive in western Pleiku Province, which will probably require the dispatch of large-scale US reaction forces from An Khe.

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## CURRENT OPERATIONAL STATUS OF MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND COASTAL RAILROAD



Information as of 21 May 1966

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Operational Status of Major Surface Lines of Communications

7. The operational status of South Vietnam's major highways declined during the period 14-21 May, specifically with the closure of important stretches of National Route 1 north of Dong Ha (Quang Tri Province), between Da Nang and Hue, and south of Tam Ky (Quang Tin Province). The nation's coastal railway was opened from Da Nang to Hue and closed from Saigon to Xuan Loc (Long Khanh Province).

Weekly Review of South Vietnam Battle Statistics

8. The week of 14-21 May compared with the previous week (7-14 May):

I. VIET CONG INCIDENTS

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>At-tacks</u>	<u>Regimental-size</u>	<u>Battalion-size</u>	<u>Company-size</u>	<u>Ter-rorism</u>
7-14 May	13	0	0	0	523
14-21 May	15	0	1	3	663

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Sabotage</u>	<u>Propaganda</u>	<u>Anti Aircraft</u>	<u>Total Incidents</u>
7-14 May	54	37	177	804
14-21 May	46	18	163	905

II. CASUALTIES

	<u>VC/PAVN</u>		<u>GVN</u>	
	<u>7-14 May</u>	<u>14-21 May</u>	<u>7-14 May</u>	<u>14-21 May</u>
Killed	988	1,235	72	236
Wounded	---	---	229	510
Missing/Captured	<u>192</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>84</u>
TOTALS	1,180	1,326	320	830

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	US		FREE WORLD	
	<u>7-14 May</u>	<u>14-21 May</u>	<u>7-14 May</u>	<u>14-21 May</u>
Killed	86	146	3	4
Wounded	566	820	14	29
Missing/Captured	<u>2</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>--</u>
TOTALS	654	978	17	33

III. WEAPONS CAPTURED

	VC/PAVN		GVN	
	<u>7-14 May</u>	<u>14-21 May</u>	<u>7-14 May</u>	<u>14-21 May</u>
Individual	262	265	54	131
Crew-served	<u>18</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>4</u>
TOTALS	280	275	54	135

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## II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

### Late Developments

1. No word has been received on the status of the barricades which "struggle" elements have erected to block the US Consulate building in Hue, and it is assumed that they are still in place. Roadblocks had also been set up by the dissidents which tended to further limit access to the consulate building.

2. The consulate has been instructed to proceed with evacuation plans if either serious risk to the safety of US personnel develops or if the consulate is prevented from carrying out its functions over a more extended period.

### Hue

3. Nearly 6,000 persons held a rally, which broke up peacefully, in the main square on the morning of 25 May. There were no uniformed military personnel observed in the crowd. Hue University professors and municipal council members vowed in their speeches to continue the fight against Thieu and Ky, protested a statement by President Johnson that the "struggle" forces represented only a minority, and denounced Americans for furnishing arms to Thieu and Ky for use against the "struggle" forces.

4. Near the end of the rally, a separate group of about 150 students arrived at the US Consulate with a message for President Johnson to which they requested a reply within 24 hours. The message asked that the US immediately "cease to support the Thieu-Ky government." An estimated 75 students then began a "hunger strike" by sitting down in front of the consulate, where they remained all day.

5. On 25 May, about 500 people attended the funeral of Lieut. Ho Dac Quyen who died as a result of wounds he received in an incident at the 1st Division Headquarters on 17 May. Present at the funeral were Buddhist leader Tri Quang and other

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high ranking bonzes, municipal council chairman Le Muong Dao, Professor Le Tuyen, and many 1st Division officers. The funeral procession paraded through the main part of the town. A funeral for Nguyen Dai Thuc, the ARVN lieutenant killed by a US helicopter gunner on 17 May, is scheduled for 8 a.m. on 26 May (Vietnam time) and will be followed by a meeting at Tuong Bac Square. The demonstration could turn into a march on the US Consulate.

6. There have been further reports of disaffection and disenchantment with the "struggle" movement on the part of military officers in the

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Saigon

7. In a meeting with Ambassador Lodge on 25 May, Chief of State Thieu outlined the government's plans for dealing with the dissident forces in Hue, indicating that the government intended to isolate the city rather than attack it. The city should be "blockaded," Thieu said, and "psychological" pressure should be applied. Thieu remarked that he planned to establish a base outside the city, probably at Quang Tri, which could be used as a rallying point for those who wished to come out. He also noted that the government's principal concern was the viability of the 1st Division as a force against the Viet Cong. A "solution" in Hue which alienated this unit would not be acceptable to the authorities in Saigon.

8. Throughout the afternoon of 25 May, scattered demonstrations took place in Saigon. However, government security forces were sufficiently strong and well positioned to move rapidly against sizable gatherings almost as soon as they formed. With the assistance of tear gas and a

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heavy monsoon rain which fell during the critical hour of 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. (Vietnam time), the groups were quickly broken up. The bulk of the demonstrators appeared to be the usual collection of youths plus a considerable number of persons in monk's robes. Quite a few youths of draft age wearing monk's robes were found to be draft evaders and are being held for induction into the armed forces. The police made more than 400 arrests during the afternoon.

9. The government used a shrewd psychological gambit by repeatedly broadcasting over Radio Saigon the text of a telegram from Buddhist Institute Chairman Chau opposing demonstrations and also the announcement of an alleged agreement between Saigon's Mayor Cua and the Buddhist Institute's Deputy Chairman Phap Tri that demonstrations should be "postponed."

10. As of 8:00 p.m. (Vietnam time), there were still some crowds in the general area of the Buddhist Institute, but government security forces had the situation under control.

#### Da Nang

11. The city was quiet on 25 May with commercial and social life more nearly normal than at any time in the past ten days. There are no known "struggle" forces anywhere in the city.

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NORTH VIETNAMESE FIGHTER PILOT ALLEGED TO HAVE DOWNED SEVERAL US AIRCRAFT

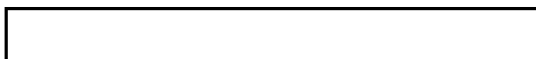


ДЕМОКРАТИЧЕСКАЯ РЕСПУБЛИКА ВЬЕТНАМ. Воины Народной армии успешно ведут борьбу с американской авиацией. Они научились сбивать стервятников днем и ночью, в любую погоду. На снимке: майор военно-воздушных сил вьетнамской Народной армии Чан Хань, сбивший несколько американских самолетов.

Фото ВИА—ТАСС.

TRANSLATION:

Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Soldiers of the Peoples Army are successfully combatting the American Air Force. They have learned to shoot down the invaders by day or night and in any weather conditions. In the photo: Major Chan Khan of the Vietnamese Air Force, who has shot down several American aircraft. photo VNA—TASS



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PHOTO: PRAVDA 20 May, 1966

REMARKS: The aircraft is a MIG-17 FRESCO. The optical gunsight is visible to the front of the pilot. The pilot is wearing the normal Soviet leather headgear containing radio headsets which is worn under a hard helmet. The dome-like object mounted atop the canopy is believed to be a VHF antenna or a light. The strips on the inside of the cockpit window to the rear of the pilot are metal or foil strips which serve as an omnidirectional antenna probably for the radio compass.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

DRV MIG Activity Eases

1. North Vietnamese jet fighters have not clashed with US aircraft since 10 May. During the period 20 April - 10 May there were 11 encounters which resulted in the downing of seven MIGs and the probable loss of one US Skyraider. It is possible that the North Vietnamese have temporarily decided against air engagements while they assess their performance and tactics during the recent clashes.

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There have also been fewer opportunities for US-DRV aircraft clashes recently since US air strikes in the Hanoi-Haiphong area have been hampered by poor weather. MIG reactions during this time have been few

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2. The 20 May issue of Pravda featured a photo of a North Vietnamese fighter pilot who allegedly shot down several US aircraft over North Vietnam. While a total of three and possibly four US aircraft have been downed by MIGs since April 1965, it is unlikely that only one pilot was responsible.

3. In recent weeks the North Vietnamese have been giving more publicity to their jet fighter and surface-to-air missile forces, presumably to bolster morale at home and to heighten concern in the US over the possibility of further US aircraft losses.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Communist Propaganda on the Unrest in South Vietnam

2. In their effort to discredit the Saigon regime, Moscow, Peking, and Hanoi have crossed wires in their characterization of the nature of "struggle forces." Hanoi and the Liberation Front, primarily interested in enticing disaffected elements to join the Front have been complimentary to the dissidents, calling them "patriotic," "progressive opposition forces," and a force of "considerable size." Radio Moscow in following this line has gone beyond Hanoi a bit and stated that the Buddhists "represent the majority of the South Vietnamese people" and constitute a "large patriotic and political force which cannot be disregarded".

3. Peking's description of the "struggle forces," however, has nothing good to say about the "struggle" movement. NCNA calls them just another "puppet faction," a "rival puppet group," and "local puppet forces." This difference in propaganda treatment does not appear to reflect any basic policy differences between the Vietnamese Communists and their supporters in Moscow and Peking. It may merely represent an effort to make the propaganda as convincing as possible to different audiences. There is no basic difference in the way the three capitals interpret the significance of the events in Da Nang. All three agree that this is the latest example of widespread opposition to the Ky government and an indication that it is on the verge of collapse.

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## VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The first reports on North Vietnam's early rice crop indicate that it has not fared well, although its size cannot yet be estimated. A 16 May Hanoi broadcast claimed that one of the difficulties encountered in the harvest was insufficient manpower which "has been partly used in fighting activities." It also attributed the difficulties, in part, to natural factions. To offset the possible loss in rice, the more important northern provinces have been told to increase their harvesting efforts and to make unusual efforts to organize labor and transportation in support of this work.

2. No claims at all were made for the size of the rice crop, an almost sure sign that performance was poor. Throughout the growing season, officials have complained of a major shortfall in planted acreage and of poor field care. The outright loss of some agricultural labor to the army has been partially responsible. Probably more important has been the disruption of normal work routines and straining of North Vietnam's organizational capabilities by the war situation. Weather conditions for the crop are believed to have been about average.

3. The early rice crop normally accounts for about a third of the annual production of rice--North Vietnam's main food. The effects of a poor harvest could be mitigated by the availability of other locally grown foods, consisting mainly of various vegetables and by the import of food from China.

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